

Divisions Affected - All

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 September 2024

An Update on the Priority Action Plan for SEND

Report by Director of Children’s Services on behalf of the Local Area Partnership

RECOMMENDATION

The Education and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to review the outlined progress in SEND improvement and for noting of the content of the report and the progress made.

Executive Summary

1. This report is presented in a different format to allow accessibility and discussion and assurance on detailed actions/ activity. This report is an update to Scrutiny on the actions taken to date since the last update to scrutiny and since the SEND area partnership inspection in July 2023.
The body of information is provided in a presentation attached in an annexe.

A key milestone occurred in July 2024, when the DfE and CQC undertook at Stocktake on progress for the Local Area Partnership (LAP) against the areas for Improvement in SEND. At the time of writing this report the formal notification of that outcome from the DfE and CQC has not been received, but it is expected to confirm that progress has been made in improvement, notwithstanding there is more to do.

Progress Update to Scrutiny: summary

2. This report has more detailed additional information on the activity and progress on the SEND transformation and improvement programme by the Local Area Partnership in the appendices.
3. The appendix 1 gives a more accessible account of activity and progress to July 2024. It demonstrates some strengths and changes, but also that there is considerably more to do. It is acknowledged that the impact of those changes will not yet be felt consistently for all individual children and families in SEND.

4. The change in SEND services across the partnership has been set within wider systems change. The Priority actions and the areas for improvement as outlined in the Ofsted/ CQC inspection of the partnership in July 2023 are the symptom or conclusion of wider systemic issues which need to be addressed.
5. For context the SEND reforms were issued in 2014 with the first inspections of their implementation beginning in 2017. Oxfordshire LAP and system was one of the first to be inspected and this resulted in the issuing of a 'Written Statement of Action' (WSoA) for improvement. Work was undertaken to address those issues and the WSoA was lifted briefly, before the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the reinspection in 2023 under a new framework resulted in an improvement notice.
6. As a result of approximately seven years of the SEND agenda needing root and branch attention, the activity to make improvement has both an approach of systemic and longitudinal change, as well as immediate short-term attention to key issues. This systems and context change is against a national backdrop of issues as highlighted in the research project on the impact of the SEND reforms by the Local Government Association and the ISOS Partnership. [Link to report.](#)
7. Unfortunately, sustained improvement involves longer term development and change such as:
 - Developing a suitably qualified workforce in which to meet specific need such as speech and language therapists or educational psychologists. There is a national shortage of such professionals.
 - Expansion of sufficient school places, including special needs school places which takes time to develop.
 - Financial re-evaluation such that funding for mainstream schools can support meeting need.
8. The timing and embedding of changes will not be felt consistently by families and children within the last six months of the activity of the Local Area Partnership.
9. Appendix 2 provides an insight into the development of the Young People's SEND Advisory board. Young people with a range of diverse SEND needs have come together to provide a young person's voice on their experiences, to provide systems leaders with information and advice and to assist, influence and craft activity of the SEND Assurance and Improvement board and business as usual SEND activity. This group will develop further, they have their own emerging work plan and key activity to review.
10. The third appendix is the Priority Action Plan (PAP) progress/ programme report. It should be noted that a green RAG rating does not mean that activity is complete and having the desired impact, but that the activity to produce impact and desired changes is delivered and complete.

11. One year on from the inspection, the PAP is currently being reviewed by the Local Area Partnership to sense check whether the described activity remains relevant and adequately describes and measures the required changes.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

12. This report is part of the Corporate Plan and strategic priorities: *Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.*

Financial Implications

13. The report provides a progress update on the work being undertaken in the SEND Service. At this stage there are no financial requests or implications to report. The plans are expected to be delivered within the budgeted resources and will be monitored as part of the Council's budget monitoring processes.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

14. The report provides a progress report on the work being undertaken to address improvement in SEND provision across Oxfordshire and as such there are no specific legal implications arising from the same.

Comments checked by:

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Annex 1: SEND Assurance and Improvement Board (SIAB), Local Area Partnership update

Annex 2: Young People's SEND Advisory group, presentation to SIAB

Annex 3: Priority Action Plan RAG rating and evidence

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